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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 003149

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SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE POLITICAL DIRECTOR ON KOSOVO

REF: STATE 165486

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Classified By: Pol/econ counselor Matt Harrington for reasons 1.4(B) and (D).

Summary

¶1. (C) MFA political director Vasco Bramao Ramos told the DCM on December 12 there is a consensus among EU member states that the period for negotiations on Kosovo is over and that independence is the only alternative. He was less certain how events would unfold over the next weeks and months, however, and believed only 8-10 member states would recognize a declaration of independence immediately. Ban Ki-Moon's refusal to offer a supportive statement had complicated the EU's efforts to generate an ESDP mission, but the EU was proceeding nonetheless and would be ready to deploy a mission no earlier than March 2008. End Summary.

¶2. (C) DCM delivered reftel talking points on December 12 to MFA political director Vasco Bramao Ramos. He was accompanied by pol/econcounselor and poloff.

European Council

¶3. (C) Bramao Ramos said there was unlikely to be much new emerging from the December 14 gathering in Brussels of EU heads of state and government. EU conclusions on Kosovo had been issued earlier in the week by Foreign Ministers attending the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) and the European Council's conclusions would be very similar, although there may be additional emphasis on the fact that Serbia's future lies in Europe.

State of Play within the EU

¶4. (C) The political director said Portugal had hoped to make more progress on Kosovo final status during its presidency. There had been some important movement, however. One, the EU had agreed Kosovo is a European responsibility and most member states now accepted the necessity of moving forward without a new UN Security Council Resolution. There is consensus that the period for negotiations is over and that, despite the problematic consequences, independence is the only alternative. "Let's just hope the process is manageable," Bramao Ramos added. Many member states continue

to have concerns about next steps, he said, and no one is completely comfortable with any of the options on the table. Upcoming Serbian elections, unfortunately, will amplify the rhetoric, probably on both sides.

Messages to parties

15. (C) The political director agreed with the need to send firm messages to both sides. He said he had spoken recently to "the Serbs" and pressed them to be flexible and imaginative. He warned them not to resist the "winds of history," a phrase he repeated to us several times. At the same time, "we have encouraged the Kosovars to be patient and they have been." The EU understands there is a limit to their patience, however.

Recognition

16. (C) Bramao Ramos expressed his view that, following a Kosovar declaration of independence, only eight to ten member states would grant recognition immediately. A second group of similar size would drag its feet but would grant recognition at some later date. A third group, he believed, would never recognize Kosovo. He believed that, a year after independence, only about half of member states will have granted recognition, and that a "vast majority" of the international community will not have recognized Kosovo. The political director stuck to that prediction even when challenged.

17. (C) Bramao Ramos insisted that using 1244 to confer legitimacy on a Kosovo declaration of independence would be a political approach rather than a legal one. Most legal scholars, he said, would reject 1244 as not providing an adequate legal basis, but that EU consensus had come around

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to accepting this option -- a big change from the summer.

18. (C) Bramao Ramos was deeply concerned about the viability of an independent Kosovo, particularly in the face of aggressive resistance by Serbia. Serbia will certainly not help economically, and Kosovo will be blocked from joining international organizations, not just by Russia but many others. He also expressed concern about the growing potential for religious extremism in the region, noting that mosques and veiled women are "blooming like flowers," and that madrassas are sprouting up everywhere.

ESDP mission

19. (C) The main challenge for deployment of an ESDP mission, according to Bramao Ramos, is finding an appropriate legal basis. In the absence of a new UNSC resolution, the EU had been counting on three things: an invitation from Pristina and supportive statements from Washington and UN Secretary-General Ban-ki Moon. Ban has now made it clear he

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will issue no such statement, which has complicated EU efforts, although the EU would ultimately find a way to proceed with deployment. The ESDP mission would be fully staffed within the next one-two months and adequate funding has been allocated. The earliest the mission would be able to deploy would be March 2008, Bramao Ramos said. EU High Representative Solana wants it on the ground earlier but logistical hurdles make that impossible.

Comment

110. (C) Although acknowledging progress, Bramao Ramos spent

more time wringing his hands about the consequences of Kosovo independence than explaining how events are likely to unfold within the EU over the next weeks and months. His prediction of the number of member states likely to recognize Kosovo was significantly more pessimistic than we have seen in reporting from other posts or in press reporting, suggesting to us that, if he has been at the center of the Union's efforts to manage the way forward, he has come away with different conclusions. His comment that Ban ki-Moon was not being helpful on Kosovo was news to us.
Stephenson